

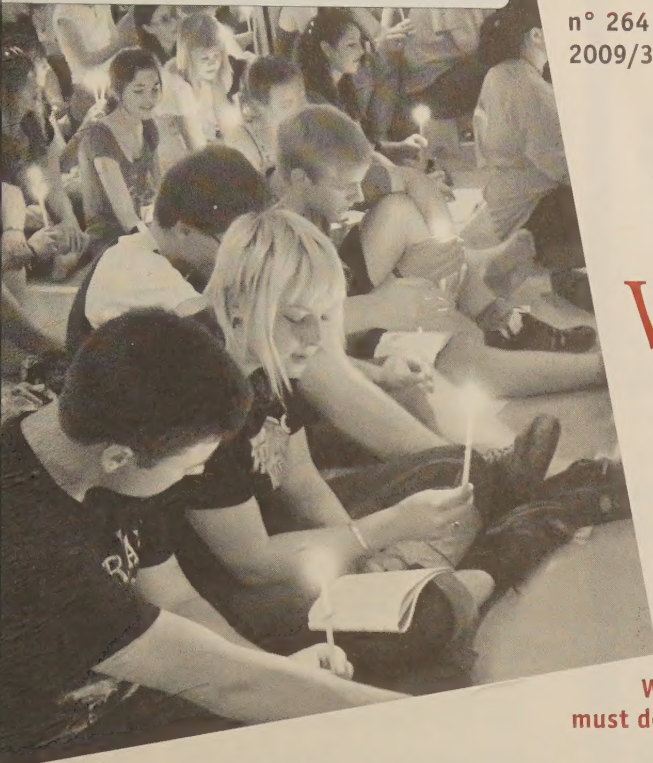
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Letter from Taizé

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What Can We Do?

PHILIPPINES

What little we can do, we must do. (Letter from Kenya)

Throughout this year, we are reflecting on the different sections of Brother Alois' Letter from Kenya. In this issue, young adults from several different countries echo themes found at the end of the Letter: "What little we can do, we must do".

The photo taken in the Church of Reconciliation during the feast of the Ascension reminds us that prayer and action reinforce each other.

Looking forward to the Asian meeting that is being prepared in Manila for February 2010, we listen to Rica, a young adult from the Philippines who speaks of her commitment in youth ministry:

Previously I was working as a business analyst, but four years ago I opted to quit my job and be a full-time volunteer in the youth ministry. My parish loves the young people and allows them to be themselves, to make mistakes and learn from their errors... That is why the commitment that the young people give back to God through our youth ministry is very inspiring.

For two years the university parish supported one girl in her studies and so she was able to finish. Most of our members come from poor families and sometimes there's this hopelessness. They think that they will not be able to go to college after high school because their family will not be able to support them. But through prayer, hard work and perseverance, this girl was able to fulfill her dream and this is what she's now trying to tell our youth: "There is hope! From hopelessness you learn how to trust; from being broken you become a whole person! Although everyday there's a struggle, God is always there." It is surprising to hear that nowadays some of the young people, even those who are active in church, think of committing suicide because of hopelessness. So this girl does not only tell her own story. Now that she

is already working, she is helping us send some other young people to school, like others in our group who are trying to send more young people to school through our small donations...the little money that we have we still share...The little we can do, we must do.

ARGENTINA

If there are scandalous forms of poverty and injustice that are plain to see, there are other kinds of poverty that are less visible. Loneliness is one of them. (Letter from Kenya)

Maria-Laura from Argentina wrote the following text after reading the Letter from Kenya:

A pact for living

Poverty disconcerts me. Starvation questions me. Ill-treatment makes me angry. Pain fills me with doubt and feelings of powerlessness. Exclusion leads me to despair... But people's faces give me new inspiration. Smiles encourage me. Tears help me to go forward. Elvira's stories make me get involved. Her energy renews hope in me. Her desire to live leads me to remain faithful. A pact for living...that is what we are trying to build together, she and I. She, in order to live. I, in order to resist.

Elvira lives in Argentina, in the north of the province of Tucuman, in a village called Benjamin Paz. She came from Bolivia, but arrived in our country when she was young. Today she is 32 years old and lives with her five children and their father. A pact for living... It wasn't easy to

Living as Friends

If there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 2, 1-5)

There are times in our lives when we grasp at once how vital unity is. It may be during a meal with friends or else at a family gathering when we see all present conversing and happy to be in one another's company. Past differences or misunderstandings may not have totally vanished but they lose their strength and importance as the bonds of shared affection are celebrated. Such experiences are privileged moments. Unity becomes a living reality. And we realize that it is a gift, perhaps the greatest of all gifts, one which we in fact desire deeply and which gives us an unsurpassed joy.

In his letter to the Philippians, Saint Paul, writing from prison and evidently in danger for his life, speaks at length about both unity and joy. He also speaks openly about the affection he has for the Philippians and their concern for him. Their relationship goes back to the beginnings of his travels in the region. They had welcomed him and the Gospel he preached, and then had continued to support and encourage him through all that followed. The tone of the letter is one of familiarity and confidence, as among people who have learned to share their lives and appreciate one another. We sense how the Gospel has turned strangers into friends, we might even say into family.

Paul, however, is worried by news he has received about conflicts within the young community (1:27; 2:14; 4:2). He responds by inviting them to take even closer to heart the gift they have already received. His words seem carefully chosen, no doubt to make a lasting impression on his readers. He then evokes by contrast some of the root causes of division and finally returns to the image of having a "same mind". Only now, this mind is not theirs but Christ's. Know that there are powerful things at work in all our lives which can destroy the gift of unity, he seems to be saying. But allow yourselves to be carried forward by what is greater still, by the life of Jesus himself. For by "the mind of Christ", Paul is not thinking mainly of Jesus' thoughts in the past, but of the dynamism of his risen presence.

Have we ever seen how the Gospel can turn strangers into friends, and even into family?

What root causes of division is it good that I be aware of? In what way does the gift of Christ "carry me forward"?

The Church

Before becoming a word of the creed, of theology and of the catechism, "Church" is a biblical word. What follows is not a meditation on the Church but an attempt to discover how the readers of the New Testament understood that word, in the hope of restoring to it something of its first freshness.

The word *ekklesia* appears over two hundred times in the Greek Bible read by most of the Christians of the first centuries. What may surprise us is that it is found almost as many times in the Old Testament as in the New. In the Greek version of the Old Testament, *ekklesia* means the assembly or congregation of God's people.

In the New Testament, *ekklesia* means either a local assembly or all Christians. But there are interesting exceptions. Luke, author of the third Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles, also used it for the assembly of a city (see Acts 19:23-40). *Ekklesia* was thus not solely reserved for religious use. The word could apply to the life of Greek cities with their assemblies which met to discuss public affairs.

Another exception is that, even in the New Testament, *ekklesia* can designate the people of God of the First Covenant. Stephen called the people who were together in the wilderness around Moses *ekklesia* (Acts 7:38). And the Letter to the Hebrews quotes a verse from Psalm 22: "I will sing to you in the midst of the *ekklesia*" (Hebrews 2: 12). Should we translate it "in the midst of the assembly" or "in the middle of the church"? The psalm speaks of the assembly of Israel. But since the Letter to the Hebrews puts these words on the lips of the Risen Christ, they refer also to the Church.

Biblical usage thus unites what we tend to distinguish. The example of the Letter to the Hebrews invites us to let the scriptures of the First Covenant speak of the church of the New Covenant. So the meaning of the word *ekklesia* becomes wider. Its use in the Psalms, in particular, gives it a musical dimension. The *ekklesia* becomes the congregation

6 **SUN**

Mk 7:31-37

Jesus took the man who was deaf and could hardly speak aside, away from the crowd. With a deep sigh, Jesus said "Be opened!" At this, the man's ears were opened, his tongue was loosened and he spoke clearly.

7 **Mon**

Is 2:1-9

You who revere the Lord, wait for his mercy. Do not turn aside from him.

8 **Tue**

Mt 1:18-23

The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Emmanuel, a name which means "God-with-us".

9 **Wed**

1 Jn 1:1-4

Life itself became visible, we saw it and testify to it. We proclaim to you the eternal life which was with the Father and was revealed to us.

10 **Thu**

Jr 15:15-21

Jeremiah said: When your words came, Lord, I devoured them: your word was my delight and the joy of my heart.

11 **Fri**

1 Co 10:12-13

God is faithful and will not allow you to be tempted beyond your strength. But when you are tempted, God will give you the means to stand up to it and will show you a way forward.

12 **Sat**

Dn 2:19-23

Daniel said: May God be blessed for ever and ever. The Lord reveals depths and mysteries, and light dwells with him.

1 **Tue**

Jn 6:41-51

Jesus said: No one can come to me unless drawn by the Father who sent me; and I will raise that person up on the last day.

2 **Wed**

1 Co 7:29-31

Paul writes: From now on those who buy something should live as if they had no possessions and those who use the things of the world should do so without being engrossed in them. Because this world as we know it is passing away.

3 **Thu**

1 Co 12:31-13:13

Paul writes: Now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, just as I have been fully known.

4 **Fri**

Ws 3:1-9

Those who trust in the Lord will understand the truth. Those who are faithful will live with him in love.

5 **Sat**

Ep 6:18-20

Pray in the Spirit at all times. Never tire of praying for all God's people.

13 **SUN**

Mk 8:34-38

Jesus said: Whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the Gospel will save it.

14 **Mon**

Ws 1:1-3

Seek God in simplicity of heart; for the Lord reveals himself to those who do not refuse him their trust.

15 **Tue**

Is 56:1-7

The Lord says: Do what is right and act with justice, for my salvation is close at hand and my deliverance will soon be revealed.

16 **Wed**

Jn 14:21-26

Jesus said: The Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and remind you of everything I have told you.

17 **Thu**

Mk 8:34-37

Jesus said: If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let them renounce themselves and take up their cross and follow me.

18 **Fri**

1 Co 1:26-31

God chose things that by human standards are weak to confound the strong. God chose what is lowly and despised in the eyes of the world.

19 **Sat**

1 Th 3:12-13

May God make your love increase so that it overflows for each other and for everyone. May God confirm your hearts.

20 **SUN**

Mk 9:30-37

Jesus said: Whoever welcomes me does not welcome me but the one who sent me.

21 **Mon**

Mt 9:10-13

St MATTHEW Jesus said: I desire mercy, not sacrifice. Indeed, I have come not to call the just, but sinners.

22 **Tue**

Ga 5:16-26

Since the Spirit is our life, let our actions be guided by the Spirit.

23 **Wed**

Ps 62

Trust in God at all times. Pour out your heart to God.

24 **Thu**

Is 55:6-11

Turn to God who will forgive freely. For, thus says the Lord, my thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways my ways.

25 **Fri**

Col 1:9-14

God has rescued us from the rule of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have the forgiveness of sins.

26 **Sat**

Lk 12:22-32

Jesus said to his disciples: Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the Kingdom.

27 **SUN**

Mk 9:48-48

Jesus said: If anyone gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ, then in truth I tell you, they will certainly not lose their reward.

28 **Mon**

Is 11:1-9

From the book of Isaiah: There shall be no more hurt or violence, for the land will be filled with the knowledge of God as the water covers the bottom of the sea.

29 **Tue**

1 Jn 3:1-3

We are already God's children. What we shall be in the future has not yet been revealed, but we know that we shall be like God because we shall see God as he really is.

30 **Wed**

Mk 12:28-34

Jesus said: Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your strength. Love your neighbour as yourself. These are the two greatest commandments.

SEPTEMBER

DAILY READINGS

Holy Spirit, mystery of a presence, you always come to us. You remain in the very depths of our souls and you awaken within us the expectation of a communion with you.

Mk 10:2-16

4SUN Jesus said: Let the little children come to me, for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs.

Mt 4:1-3

5Mon Days will come when many peoples will come and say, "Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, so that he may teach us his ways." And they will hammer their swords into ploughshares and their spears into bill-hooks.

1 Tm 1:12-17

6Tue Paul writes: I am thankful to Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has strengthened me and judged me trustworthy, by calling me to his service.

Is 62:1-5

7Wed From the book of Isaiah: For the sake of my people, I shall not keep silent. I shall not rest until her justice shines out like the breaking of day.

Jl 3:1-5

8Thu The Lord says: I will pour out my Spirit on all humanity.

Jn 1:21-25

9Fri James writes: Those who listen to the word of God but do not do what it says are like people who look at their faces in a mirror and, after looking at themselves, go away and immediately forget what they look like.

Jn 14:22-26

10Sat Jesus said: Peace I leave you; my peace I give you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid.

Mk 10:17-22

11SUN Jesus said to a person who questioned him: You lack one thing. Go, sell everything you have and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.

Jr 7:21-24

12Mon The Lord says: Listen to my voice, then I will be your God and you will be my people. In everything, follow the way that I will mark out for your happiness.

Heb 13:1-8

13Tue Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have welcomed angels without knowing it.

Jr 12:1-3a

14Wed Jeremiah said: You know me, Lord, and you see me. You know that my heart is with you.

1 P 4:7-11

15Thu Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ.

Jn 8:31-36

16Fri Jesus said: Everyone who commits sin is a slave. Now a slave has no permanent place in the household, but a son belongs to it for ever. So if the Son sets you free, you will indeed be free.

1 Co 3:18-23

17Sat Paul writes: All things are yours; but you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God.

Mk 10:35-45

18SUN Jesus said: The Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life to set many free.

Ps 69:30-37

19Mon You who seek God, may your hearts live! For God listens to the poor.

1 P 3:8-17

20Tue Proclaim the Lord Christ holy in your hearts and always be ready to answer people who ask you the reason for the hope you have.

Jn 14:1-12

21Wed Jesus said: The words I say to you are not just my own, it is the Father, living in me, who is doing his work.

2 Th 1:11-12

22Thu May God fulfill every good purpose of yours by his power and complete all that you have been doing by faith.

Jn 12:35-36

23Fri Jesus said to his disciples: Believe in the light so that you may become children of light.

1 Th 5:12-22

24Sat Be always joyful, pray continually and give thanks in all circumstances.

Mk 10:46-52

25SUN Jesus asked a blind man, "What do you want me to do for you?" "Rabbi, I want to see", he replied. And Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has saved you."

Ps 138

26Mon Lord, you look upon the humble. Though I live surrounded by trouble, you give me life.

Ep 1:15-23

27Tue May God enlighten the eyes of your heart so that you may see the hope to which he calls you.

Mt 6:19-21

28Wed Jesus said: Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

Ac 20:17-38

29Thu Paul said: Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, who said, "There is more happiness in giving than in receiving."

1 P 3:8-12

30Fri Do not repay one wrong with another. Seek peace and pursue it.

Ps 89:1-30

31Sat I shall sing of the love of the Lord for ever; my words shall proclaim your faithfulness to all generations. For your love stands firm for ever, you have established your faithfulness in heaven itself.

God of all eternity,
you love each one of us
without exception and in
your constant forgiveness
we discover peace of
heart.

OCTOBER

DAILY READINGS

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

NOVEMBER

DAILY READINGS

1 **SUN** ALL SAINTS

Jesus said: Happy are the clear in heart: they shall see God. Happy are the peacemakers: they shall be called children of God.

2 **Mon** Jesus said: I am

the resurrection and the life. Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live.

3 **Tue** God has entrusted

us with the Gospel, and so we preach, not trying to please people but God who knows our hearts.

4 **Wed** "Come," my heart

says, "seek God's face!" Your face, Lord, do I seek.

5 **Thu** The Lord says: Let

the stranger who has come to me not say, "For sure, the Lord will exclude me from his people." For I shall lead to my holy mountain all those who love God's name and become his servants; I shall give them joy.

6 **Fri** May God strengthen

you in your inner being through the Spirit, so that Christ may live in your hearts through faith.

7 **Sat** St. Paul wrote to

Timothy: Do not be ashamed to be a witness to our Lord who has saved us and given us a holy calling.

8 **SUN** Jesus saw a poor

widow put two small coins into the temple treasury and, calling his disciples, he said, "In truth I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all the others, for they all gave out of their wealth, but she has put in everything she possessed."

9 **Mon** Who among you

reverses the Lord? Who among you walks in darkness and sees no light? Trust in the name of the Lord and rely upon your God.

10 **Tue** The wisdom of God

is readily seen by those who love her. Those who seek her will find.

11 **Wed** God says: My home

is a high and holy place, but I am with the humble and contrite to revive their spirit.

12 **Thu** When they were

forbidden to speak in the name of Jesus, Peter and John replied, "We cannot help speaking about what we have seen and heard."

13 **Fri** Christ Jesus gave

his life for us in order to redeem us from our faults and to purify a people to be his very own.

14 **Sat** In Christ, we have

been marked with the seal of the Holy Spirit; this is the pledge for us of the freedom of the people whom God has taken for his own, to the praise of his glory.

15 **SUN** Jesus said: Heaven

and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.

16 **Mon** God is faithful, he

will give you strength and protect you from the evil one.

17 **Tue** Christ, the stone

the builders rejected, has become the cornerstone.

18 **Wed** Seek the Lord

while he is near. Turn to our God, who pardons freely.

19 **Thu** Jesus said: If you

have faith, everything you ask for in prayer, you will receive.

20 **Fri** Jesus said: Your Fa-

ther knows what you need before you ask him.

21 **Sat** The Spirit of the

Lord fills the world: it holds all things together and knows every word said.

22 **SUN** Jesus said to

Pilate: For this I was born, and for this I came into the world: to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice.

23 **Mon** The flock you

chose, Lord, is alone in the wilderness. Shepherd your people and lead them to pasture.

24 **Tue** In the evening,

after sunset, people brought to Jesus the sick and the possessed. He healed them and drove out many evil spirits.

25 **Wed** In the desert, the

Lord went ahead of his people, by day in a pillar of cloud to show them the way, and by night in a column of fire to give them light. Thus they could walk by day and by night.

26 **Thu** At the sight of the

crowds Jesus was moved to compassion, because they were like sheep without a shepherd.

27 **Fri** Paul writes: We

were beset by conflicts without and by fears within; but God, who encourages the downcast, consoled us.

28 **Sat** The Lord says: See,

I am going to create new heavens and a new earth. Be filled with rejoicing for ever, for I am creating my people to be gladness.

29 **SUN** ADVENT

Jesus said: Be on the watch and pray at all times.

30 **Mon** St ANDREW

Jesus saw Simon and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of people." And at once they left their nets and followed him.

Jesus our peace, with our very little faith we long to be attentive to you as you tell us: "Turn to God and put your trust in the Gospel."

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

DECEMBER

DAILY READINGS

6 **SUN** Lk 3:1-6 John the Baptist came as is written in the book of Isaiah: A voice of one who cries in the desert, "Prepare a way for the Lord, make straight his paths!"

7 **Mon** Rv 21:1-7 God will make his home among human beings; they will be his people and he will be their God.

8 **Tue** Ep 1:3-14 God chose us in Christ, before the world was made, to be holy and faultless before him in love.

9 **Wed** Jr 33:14-16 Days are coming, says the Lord, when I shall fulfil the promise of happiness I made to my people, and from among them I shall raise one who will do what is just and right in the land.

10 **Thu** Col 1:15-20 Christ is the image of the unseen God; in him all things have been created, in heaven and upon the earth, both the visible and the invisible.

11 **Fri** Mk 13:33-37 Jesus said: What I am saying to you I say to all: Stay awake!

12 **Sat** Is 40:1-5 Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. The uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. Then the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all people shall see it together.

13 **SUN** Lk 3:15-22 John the Baptist said: I baptise you with water, but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire.

14 **Mon** Lk 1:5-25 The angel said to Zechariah, father of John the Baptist: Your wife will bear you a son who will be great in the sight of the Lord. He will be filled with the Holy Spirit and will bring back many people to the Lord their God.

15 **Tue** Pr 4:18-27 The path of the upright is like the light of dawn, whose brightness increases to the full light of day.

16 **Wed** Gn 12:1-5 The Lord said to Abraham, "Leave your country, your kinsfolk and your father's house for the land I will show you." And Abraham set out, as the Lord had told him.

17 **Thu** 2 P 3:8-9,13-14 Peter writes: God is not slow in carrying out his promises, as some people think. Rather, God is being patient with you, wanting no one to be lost and for all to be brought to repentance.

18 **Fri** Jm 5:7-11 James writes: Be patient; do not lose heart, for the Lord's coming will be soon.

19 **Sat** Is 28:16-17 The Lord says: See, I am laying a foundation stone for my people. And I will take justice for a measure and righteousness as a level.

20 **SUN** Lk 1:39-45 When Elizabeth heard Mary's greeting, the child leapt in her womb. And Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit and exclaimed with a loud cry, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb."

21 **Mon** Is 49:13-26 Shout for joy, you heavens; earth exult! For the Lord is consoling his people and having compassion on his afflicted ones.

22 **Tue** Rm 10:5-10 The Word of God is very near you, it is on your lips and in your heart.

23 **Wed** 2 Co 8:7-15 Our Lord Jesus Christ became poor for your sake, so that through his poverty you might become rich.

24 **Thu** Mt 18:1-4 Jesus said: Truly, I tell you, the one who becomes humble like a child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

25 **Fri** Jn 1:9-18 CHRISTMAS The Word became flesh and lived among us. From God's fullness we have all received.

26 **Sat** Mt 10:17-22 ST STEPHEN Jesus said: When you are handed over, do not worry about what to say or how to say it. What you are to say will be given to you when the time comes, for it is not you who will be speaking but the Spirit of your Father will be speaking in you.

27 **SUN** Lk 2:41-52 When Mary and Joseph found the child Jesus in the Temple, he said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" And his mother treasured all these things in her heart.

28 **Mon** 1 Jn 1:1-7 God is light, in him there is no darkness at all. If we walk in the light, we are in communion with one another.

29 **Tue** Mt 11:28-30 Jesus said: Learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.

30 **Wed** Mt 19:16-22 Jesus said to a rich young man: If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.

31 **Thu** Jn 14:19-23 Jesus said: Anyone who loves me will keep my word, and the Father will love them, and we shall come to them and make our home in them.

Holy Spirit, inner light, you shine on the happy days as on the troubled times of our lives. And when the light seems to grow dim, your presence remains.

1 **Tue** Is 51:4-8 The Lord says: My justice will become a light to the nations. My salvation is on the way and all peoples will put their hope in me.

2 **Wed** Ps 37 Make the Lord your joy: God will give you even more than your heart's desire.

3 **Thu** Lv 19:33-34 God says: Love the foreigners among you as you love yourselves.

4 **Fri** Is 58:5-12 The Lord says: Is that the sort of fast that pleases me: hanging your head like a bending reed? Is not rather this the fast that pleases me: breaking unjust fetters, setting free the oppressed and sharing your food with the hungry?

5 **Sat** 1 P 1:22-25 Peter writes: Love one another deeply, from the heart.

These short readings are those read, day by day, at community prayer in Taizé. The Bible reference given indicates a slightly longer passage.

celebration, one brought together by Christ's

The word *ekklesia* is often used in the Acts of the Apostles, but surprisingly it is not found in the first letters. The community that comes into being at Pentecost is not called *ekklesia*. The text speaks simply of "all believers" (Acts 2:44). Then the word *kyrios* appears (Acts 4:32), a word which can be translated as "the multitude of believers". But extra-biblical parallels have led exegetes to recognize that *plêthos* can refer to a community. The word is sometimes translated as "assembly" or "plenary assembly" (for example Acts 6:2), but it is not an exact synonym of *ekklesia*. The *plêthos*, like other groups existing in Jerusalem at that time, is a community with its rules of membership, its rites and leaders.

Thus the Acts of the Apostles witnesses to the fact that *ekklesia* was not exclusively used to designate the Christian communities. From the letters of Clement, bishop of Rome, and Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, we know that both words, *ekklesia* and *plêthos*, coexisted at least until the early second century. But what distinctive characteristics of the Christian communities did the word *ekklesia* emphasize? And why did it finally take over? The book of Acts suggests that this had something to do with the apostle Paul, since the word started to play a role at the same time as Paul himself did (Acts 8). This is also confirmed by the Pauline letters, where the word *ekklesia* is particularly frequent.

Why did Paul prefer *ekklesia*? In this word, there is the verb "to call". While *plêthos* refers to a community as such, the *ekklesia*, in the Greek world as well as in the Bible, is an assembly called together, a congregation. It seems that every time Paul says *ekklesia*, he implies a "convocation" or "call". For him, "the church of God" are "saints by calling" (1 Corinthians 1:2), those who were "called to the communion" of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:9).

Half a century later, writing to the Christians of Smyrna, Ignatius of Antioch describes the *ekklesia* for the first time as "catholic", in other words universal: "Wherever the bishop appears there is the community (*plêthos*), just as where Jesus Christ is, there is the catholic church (*ekklesia*)." Christians form concrete communities. But for Ignatius just as for Paul, the most beautiful word is "church". For in this word the accent is not on stewardship of a community, but on the universal call of Christ's gospel. And the adjective "catholic" implies that the same and the same gospel, everywhere and at all times, calls to the one communion of Christ.

REFLECTING ON THE WORD

Can we really make the world better?

After a twentieth century in which so many fine dreams have been disappointed and so many hopes diverted, how can we talk about what we can do to change the world or make it better? Is disenfranchised discourse our only option? Could resignation be wisdom? Should abdication be taken for lucidity? Must we join the ranks of fatalists to be intelligent? Will whoever gives the best of their energies be doomed one day to say, like the suffering servant of Isaiah: "I wore myself out for nothing?"

Asking such questions is, in the final analysis, asking the question of our freedom, of the field open and available for our activity. Before commenting on the approach that Brother Roger took regarding these questions, the philosopher Marguerite Léna recalled these words of Kierkegaard: "There is no more freedom when nothing is possible any more." And she went on to say: "Brother Roger always worked to restore and to open up that dimension of the possible that allows freedom to breathe." To open up the field of the possible, to refuse to fatalism any attempt to restrict that field but, on the contrary, to widen it, by maintaining "the green spaces of hope in the landscape of society," as one day Cardinal Danneels wrote, is a task that Christians can buckle down to with many others.

Rowan Williams, the Archbishop of Canterbury, appeared to have the same concern for widening our outlook when he wrote to the participants in the European Meeting in Geneva: "To have faith is to be willing to live so as to show that God is alive. And that means to live in ways which show that there are more possibilities than the world recognizes."

Christians have demonstrated inventiveness throughout history. Their faith led them to innovate. Thus were born the first hospitals and care given to patients free of charge at the time of Saint Basil of Caesarea in the fourth century, and probably well before. Speaking of another change in the ancient world, a historian was surprised that the names of Melania and Pinian have been so little remembered. Enjoying the largest fortune of the Roman Empire, those two Christians of Saint Augustine's day decided to free their slaves and share everything with them. Why were the significant changes that this couple introduced into history so little talked about? Out of fear of acknowledging the positive role played by Christians? Or out of fear by the Christians themselves to emphasize such radical choices...?

Today, the period of unprecedented peace that began with the construction of Europe is here to convince us that we should not underestimate what can be done. With the believer of the second century who wrote to Diognetus about Christians, we can say: "The post that God has assigned them is so noble that they are not allowed to desert it."

get to know her; I encountered a number of denials and shut doors, but one day, out of fatigue or curiosity, she opened the door of her home, and I entered her home, her life. Without much room to ask me to sit down, Elvira nonetheless invited me to share a few moments of her daily life. I discovered, through looks, laughter, games and yelling, that explosive and special woman.

After our first meeting, the need to know her better and be able to do something for her made me knock on her door again and again. And so, over time, I got to know her story, to discover (in spite of her Spanish mixed with her native language, Quechua) that she was totally illiterate, that she had known hunger and violence in her childhood and that because of that she was suffering from a mild disability. That explained her childish nature and the messiness of her house in terms of order and cleanliness.

Despite all this, Elvira is the mother of five children she deeply loves and for whom she gives herself every day in backbreaking work on the land. Sometimes she takes her children with her; sometimes they stay at home under the supervision of Yesi, 11 years old. Her life is the reflection of a constant struggle, and many fears, much pain, frustration and silences.

In the three years I have known her, Elvira still has not learned to read or write, but I have peace of mind in knowing that she has at least discovered one thing: the small miracle of feeling that one is not alone, that one has made a friend and found a hand that can help if necessary.

A pact for living... because I will never forget her words, I will never forget her eyes, her tears, her outstretched arms... Because I cannot forget that she needs someone and I go to her home as if drawn there by a magnet, with the hope of finding her in the process of sweeping her yard or playing with her children, and with the faith that God accompanies me in accompanying her, and that one day something in her life will change.

When it is authentic, when it is born of the need to create and to believe, nothing can stop love. Because in any case, even in passing through the worst pains, the craziest exhaustions and the most unfair stories, love makes possible the small miracles of everyday life, those miracles that nourish faith and dreams. Every time I see her, every hug or phone call when I shout out my name, is for me a miracle of God. It is that miracle that allows me to keep believing and to be sure that remaining faithful to love can destroy all our personal genocides and build new heavens.

TOGO

To struggle against injustice and the threat of conflicts, and to encourage a sharing of material goods, it is essential to acquire skills. Persevering in one's studies or in professional training can also be a service rendered to others. (Letter from Kenya)

Jean-Philippe, a young man from Togo who spent two months at Taizé last summer, writes:

The mystery of the creation of heaven, earth and especially of human beings testifies to the existence of an author who is God. This creator, who is the Father of all people, lives in each of us, whether we are believers or not. And he has a life-plan for each one of us. It is thus by assuming our existence that we can experience the grandeur of God's love for all of us.

After obtaining a master's in English, we were greatly surprised to find ourselves unemployed and without means to pursue university studies. My worries, far from leading me to disappointment, found comfort in the youth group that I formed in the parish. I understood that God was helping me to accept these difficult conditions and be more helpful to my brothers and sisters. Despite the heavy responsibility I persevered, encouraged and proud to know that this training made possible fellowship and simplicity of life where the poor no longer felt excluded. In this way I received the grace to participate in the pilgrimage to Taizé. Since my return from this trip, training has improved. Many youth groups, of Alédjo-Kadara, of Kara, of Lomé and of Soumdina benefit from the spiritual spinoffs of Taizé. I continue to share with my brothers the experience of fellowship in Christ, the sense of listening to and welcoming others and the sense of silence and prayer, not to mention the wonderful meditative Taizé chants that facilitate encounter with God. The success of all this is not only the result of effort and of prayer, but also of the trust and the love of God. Taizé gave me great hope. And this leads me to say that one never stops learning and the more one is formed, the better one can serve.

I think that if in our societies, all of us were to take on our responsibilities and, beyond personal profit, seek the common good, we would contribute more to building a more human and more fraternal world.

A Million Bibles in China

During his meditation on Holy Saturday evening, Brother Alois announced that the first hundred thousand copies of the million Bibles printed by Taizé in China had begun to be distributed at Easter across the country. The printing of this edition, using the Franciscan translation "studium biblicum", with introductions and notes, was made in Nanjing. The 900,000 other copies will be sent across China in the coming months. Part of the paper is being supplied by the United Bible Societies. In China, Church leaders encourage the reading of the Bible, especially by young people, catechumens and new believers. This edition sponsored by Taizé is a way of supporting them.

But Brother Alois also wanted to share a concern: "To carry out this project, we need the financial assistance of all those who can help." To contribute to this project, send a bank transfer to: Operation Hope, IBAN: FR76 30003 01212 00037260029 02 SWIFT: SOGEFRPP.

Letter from Taizé

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